

Ray Alone Killed King, Lawyer Says

Washington

Trial lawyer Percy Foreman testified yesterday that jailhouse interviews convinced him that James Earl Ray alone assassinated Martin Luther King Jr. in the hope of becoming a white hero.

Ray admitted in one lawyer-client interview that his conspiracy story involving a mysterious contact named "Raoul" was a fake, Foreman testified.

Foreman said that, in another interview, Ray told him he left assassination evidence behind in Memphis, Tenn., because he wanted former prison friends to know he had killed King.

"Ray did think shooting Dr. Martin Luther King would make him a hero to the white race," Foreman told the House assassinations committee. "He thought he would be the white hope."

Denying Ray's charge that Foreman coerced him into pleading guilty, the Houston lawyer said the plea was Ray's idea because Ray knew that otherwise he would be executed for King's murder.

Ray is serving a 99-year prison sentence as King's convicted assassin. He contends he is innocent and thought he was participating only in a gun-running operation conducted by a man he knew only as Raoul. King was assassinated in Memphis April 4, 1968.

But Foreman testified that Ray admitted in one of their interviews he made up the Raoul story for the book, "He Slew the Dreamer," written by William Bradford Huie under a contract with Ray.

"He told me there was no Raoul," Foreman said. "He said he made Raoul up because that was what they wanted."

"He said Raoul was the operator of a bawdy house he held up once," Foreman added.

Ray said in another interview, according to Foreman, that he deliberately left behind the assassination rifle and belongings with his fingerprints so former prison friends would know he killed King.

He said Ray frequently talked about an emerging race war between white and black people.

"I asked him once if the reason he wanted to go to Africa was to kill some more black people and he said 'Yeah. I guess you could say that,'" Foreman testified.

Foreman denied he recommended that Ray plead guilty to King's assassination. Ray himself suggested that strategy to prevent his own execution, Foreman said.

The committee produced a letter Foreman wrote Feb. 13, 1969, advising Ray to negotiate a guilty plea, but Foreman told panel members that "you're taking that out of context."